IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI B. K. GADHVI): (a) and (b) As per the terms of reference of the Fourth Pay Commission, the Commission was required to make its recommendations having regard inter alia to the prevailing pay structure under the State Governments. The Commission had complied with this requirement before making their recommendations on the revision of pay scales of Central Government servants and other matters. However, the Government of India did not accept a suggestion from a State Government for discussing the implications of the implementation of the recommendations of the Fourth Pay Commission on the finances of the State Governments and plan outlays.

Decisions taken at the meeting of Chief Ministers

1015. SHRI PARVATHANENI UPENDRA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether he had convened a meeting of the Chief Ministers on February 9 and 10 this year;

(b) if so, what were the subjects discussed at the meeting and the decisions taken thereat; and

(c) whether some Chief Ministers had registered their dissent to the decisions?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI AJIT PANJA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The subjects discussed in the meeting include levy of tax on inter-State consignment of goods levy of discriminatory rates of sales tax by the States and Union Territories, the question of extending levy of additional excise duties in lieu of sales tax on 5 additional commodities, evasion of sales tax by bogus booking of goods by rail, monitoring and implementation of externally aided projects in States, constraints in the opening of bank branches, assistance from the State Governments for recovery of overdues by commercial banks, professionalisation of the posts of Directors and Chief Executives of State Financial Corporations and State Industrial Development Corporations, group insurance scheme for landless agricultural labourers, hut insurance scheme for poor families in rural areas and recovery of overdues from State Electricity Boards.

Detailed discussions were held on these subjects and it was agreed to take further action in the light of the decisions-taken|discussions held. Some of the important items on which consensus was arrived at include levy of tax on intre-State consignment of goods and various modalities connected thereto, adoption of minimum floor-level rates recommended by the Committee of Sales Tax Commissioners in respect of 20 identified items and not to extend the scheme of levy of additional excise duties in lieu of sales tax on 5 additional commodities, for the present.

(c) Some of the Chief Ministers expressed reservation for giving concurrent power of exemption to the Centre from the levy of consignment tax and desired their reservation to be registered, but they agreed to the issue of guidelines by the Centre.

Pollution of Loktak Lake

1016. DR. YELAMANCHILI SIVAJI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Loktak, the largest natural lake in Eastern India is now in a highly polluted state and its very existence is threatened; and

(b) if so, what steps have been taken to restore the ecological balance of the lake and preserve its natural state?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI Z. R. ANSARI): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) The State Government has constituted Loktak Development Authority for undertaking works for conservation and development of Loktak Lake The measures proposed include clearance of aquatic weeds, construction of ring bund, desiltation, afforestation of catchment area and collection of baseline data on various ecological aspects. The Lake has also been selected for conservation under the Wetland Scheme of the Union Government.

High Court benches

1017. DR. YELAMANCHILI SIVAJI: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state whether Government are considering to set up additional benches of High Courts away from the existing State capitals; if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE AND THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI B. SHANKARANAND): No specific and complete proposal from any State Government for establishment of a Bench of a High Court is pending consideration with the Central Government at present.

Plan and Non-Plan Expenditure incurred on Union Territory of Delhi

1018. DR. YELAMANCHILI SIVAJI: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what is the total amount of Plan, Non-Plan and other public expenditure incurred under each head of account on the Union Territory of Delhi from 1980 to 1988, year-wise and

(b) what percentage of the said expenditure was used for the purpose of the Union Territory's Metropolitan area?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI SANTOSH MOHAN DEV): (a) The figures of actual expenditure under each major head pertaining to Plan and Non-Plan of UT of Delhi during the years from 1980-81 to 1987-88 are given in the enclosed statements [*See* Appendix CXLIX, Annexure No. 53].

(b) 100 per cent, as the whole of the Union Territory of Delhi is treated as Metropolitan.

Trade in Indian Currency with Foreign Buyers

1019. DR. YELAMANCHILI SIVAJI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that more and more foreign buyers of various kinds of Indian goods are contracting in terms of the continually depreciating Indian rupee and thus depriving us of hard currency;

(b) whether any systematic study has been made recently by Government in this regard and if so, what are the details thereof; and

(c) if the answers to parts (a) & (b) above be in the negative what is the basis of Government's view in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P R DAS MUNSHI): (a) to (c) It is not possible to ascertain and verify whether foreign buyers of Indian goods are contracting in terms of Indian rupee as the trade contracts entered into by private parties are not